

# Understanding Evil #3

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There is a theory that Satan, whose original name in Hebrew is *heylel*, was intended by God to be a testing spirit, but that somehow the old devil got out of hand. He was supposed to be the teacher. Like for example if you enroll at a health club, an athletic club. All of us know that you do not get stronger unless you lift some weight, unless your body is forced to do some work. So you will often start off. Your instructor will come out and give you a set of different machines or weights you have to work on and so much weight and so many repetitions and you are down on the machine pushing them up and he will come along and he will put some more weight on the machine. Now give me eight repetitions. It is sort of like the drill instructor in the Marine Corp. You know. He will tell you to get on the floor and give me 20 in pushups and so on it goes with the idea of one who presses you, one who tests you, one who makes you work against something that is either a weight, a struggle, a fight of some course because someone once said whatever doesn't kill me makes me stronger.

This was one of the ideas, one of the theories that was advanced about the devil that that was intended in the first place to be. I am not at all sure that is true. I do not see enough reason for that in the scripture because I think there is sufficient trying and testing that goes on in life from time and chance you know just stuff happens in this world from time to time and people are big enough trial upon one another without having to have some evil spirit come along and add to the problem.

The Bible though tells us a lot about this spirit world and it helps us to understand it and it helps us to respond to it if we understand it. As far as I can tell, the Bible is really about the only source we can go to that we can really trust what we read there to help us understand what we are dealing with and one of the things you need to understand as you read the Bible. When you come across the word evil in the Bible, it is used in the old sense, not in the modern sense. The old sense of the word in both Hebrew and Greek, the one evil means adverse or adversity. In the modern language, evil implies malice. In both the Greek and Hebrew words that are translated into English that is not necessarily implied. It may or may not include malice. It may be nothing more than just something that happens that is adverse to you.

A group of students for example took shelter under a tree some place. The lightning struck that tree and killed 4 or 5 students under that tree. In the Biblical sense of the word, that is an evil event. In the modern sense of the word, it is a terrible accident because there was no malice. Nobody intended to do them harm. It was just one of those things that

happened in life. Now it is in this way you have to understand a very important scripture in the Old Testament. It is Isaiah 45:5.

God says I am the Lord and there is none else. There is no God beside me. I girded you though you have not known me. That they may know me from the rising of the sun and from the West that there is none beside me. I am the Lord and there is none else. I formed the light. I create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.

I don't know how many times in my ministerial career I have had somebody ask me about that passage of scripture. They don't understand how it can be that God creates evil. Well darkness is the absence of light and sometimes perhaps evil is the absence of good, but that is not even there what God is talking about. He says I create peace and I also create adversity.

In a sense, it is the creation of God that allows lightening to exist and lightening is going to strike and by time and chance occasionally it is going to kill people. So in one sense of the word, God accepts responsibility for those accidents that happen because He created a world in which the weather patterns will create tornadoes, hurricanes, destructive forces, lightning and things that kill. In nature, there is plenty of adversity, plenty of things for us to push against, plenty of things for us to overcome without us having to deal with a spirit as well. The raw meaning of the word is bad, but it does not mean intentionally bad. God would never create anything intentionally bad. It means that God creates the things that create adversity.

So when you read along in the Old Testament and you read of an evil spirit, it does not necessarily convey the meaning of the modern western reader as it is inclined to attach to it. You can call it an adverse spirit and you are a lot closer to the meaning and the intent of the phrase. We find adverse spirits in the Old Testament. That is clear. They seem to be a reference to what in the New Testament you would call an unclean spirit or a demon, but as you read along and as you study these you will begin to realize that there are distinctions that can be drawn there.

We also have devils in the Old Testament. One word for it in the Old Testament is the word Satyr. It actually means he-goat. It can be found in Leviticus 17 verse 7. It says they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto satyrs after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute throughout their generations. There is an interesting connection between going a whoring after a satyr because the satyr, the he-goat has very, very, very strong sexual overtones.

Another word translated devil in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word which is pronounced roughly shade and the strange connection with that in the English language. The English dictionary for shade by the way. The word shade takes us back to the Greek. It does not take us back to the Hebrew which it seems like it ought to. The Greek shade is literally the dark side. As a result of that and I think the Hebrew word probably concludes that as

well. It is a Hebrew word for demons and it comes in Hebrew from a swelling up. Israel's sacrifices to the shade and to the he-goat, but these terms are never used in terms of interaction between the spirit world and our world. There is nothing in that case that goes on. In fact, there is really no demon possession in the Old Testament that is quite like we find in the New Testament, but affliction by spirits was very well known. One of the troublesome questions about this is addressed in the Old Testament. It is a question that I don't bother as a lot of people. How does this situation where a person is being distressed by, attacked by, possessed by or whatever else it may be by, by an adverse spirit, how does it get started?

How does a person get involved in the spirit world? We are not told everything, but we are told some things that are very important and it is a story in the Bible of the very first man ever to be troubled by an evil spirit. Troubled. Now Job may have been earlier than this, but he was not mentally or emotionally troubled by the spirit. He was physically afflicted and in his case we will address that as a totally different matter.

So let's set the story. Israel, God never intended for Israel to have a King. He intended to be their King. He was to be the one who ruled over them, their protector, the one who fought for them in battle and so forth. But in the process of time because of their sins, they were afflicted again and again and they decided that one of the sources of their problems was that they did not have a King. They really were not organized properly so they needed to get ahead, somebody in charge around here who can pull the armies together and make us fight better and more efficiently and protect us from our enemies. So we want a King. You can almost hear the chant beginning to go up from these people. The story of how that began and how that God was disappointed in Israel on that and how God considered it a rejection of Him telling Samuel you might as well get used to this idea Samuel. They have not rejected you. They have rejected me that I would not be King over them. But God did relent and He let them have a King and He assured that they would start with the best of the best.

Now I want you to think about this because this is really important. Some people have assumed that God started Israel off since He did not really approve of this King any way that He gave them a bad King to start with. That is not the case. That is a completely wrong and total misconstruction of what took place here. He wanted them to have the best of the best. He wanted a fighter. He wanted a warrior. He wanted to give them a big man. A man who could lead them into battle and do the things that a King was supposed to be. Remember though, they decided they wanted a King. God decided who the King would be. He chose a remarkable man. He was huge. He was head and shoulders above everyone else around, big, strong, young, apparently good looking, but he was a humble man also and self-effacing right from the very start.

He was a fine strong man, a good warrior, which a King had to be in those days. He also which is much less well understood about Saul. He became a converted man. The story is told in I Samuel chapter 10 and I think it is important for us to read it and absorb what this

is all about so that we understand the characters that we are dealing with in this historical study. I think in many cases we fail to understand the Bible because we don't pay enough attention to the history. To the things that actually happened to the characters and the events and the reasons why these events took place.

Well Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him and he said, Isn't this because the Lord has anointed you to be captain over his inheritance. When you are departed from me today, you shall find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin and Zelzah. They will say to you, the asses you went to seek are found. Saul had been out looking for mules his father had lost. They had sent him out to find them and Samuel encountered him on the way. He said, Lo, your father stopped worrying about the asses and sorroweth for you, saying, What about my son?

He says, you will go on from there. You will come to the plain of Tabor and you will meet there three men going up to God to Bethel. One carrying three kids, another with three loaves of bread and another with a bottle of wine. Now this is all really interesting. What Samuel is giving him here is extremely specific, because he wants Saul to understand God is in this. God has sent me to anoint you and the events that follow are events that God is in them all the way. He says they will salute you and give you two, not three, loaves of bread which you will receive of their hands. After that, you will come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines. And it shall come to pass when you have come to the city you are going to meet a company of prophets coming down from a high place with psaltery, a tabret, a pipe and a harp before them and they will prophesy.

Now remember, this is not a mere coincidence this mention of all these musical instruments in prophesying. They went together. Prophesying was often times done to music. They were singing prophets. And the spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you will prophesy with them and you will be turned into another man. Think about that. The spirit of the Lord will come upon you. You will be turned into another man. Isn't that what conversion is all about? I mean Saul was, to use the modern vernacular, going to be "Born Again" (laughing) on that day. He was a new man and let it be that when these signs are come upon you that you shall do as occasion shall serve you because God is with you.

You shall go down before me to Gilgal and behold I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings, to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings, seven days you will wait until I come to you to show to you what to do. Now Samuel's instructions were really very specific. You wait seven days, but also you wait until I come. And it was so, that when he had turned back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart. All those signs came to pass that day.

You know you think about that, this big tall, handsome man and yet a man with agnate humility. A man who was little in his own sight who did not think great things about

himself. A man who was a fighter, who could be a fighter and then the man upon whom the holy spirit came.

You know I guess many people who read the New Testament do not understand how the Old Testament came upon people. I mean how the holy spirit came upon people in the Old Testament. How people were converted in the Old Testament. How they had the holy spirit in them. How they were influenced by it and lead by it in the Old Testament. Saul was as converted as any man in the Old Testament ever was. Just put that in your mind, your mental bank as it were and don't lose track of that fact.

Now we will switch down now to I Samuel the 13th chapter. Saul reigned one year. And when he had reigned two years over Israel he chose 3000 men of Israel where of 2000 were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a 1000 were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent. Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines. It was in Geba and the Philistines heard of it and Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land saying, Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and Saul was had an abomination with the Philistines and the people were called together after Saul in Gilgal.

Now just pause as a side bar here to mention the fact that there are a lot of chronological problems in Samuel. Whoever the person was, I presume it was Samuel who wrote these words down. When he wrote them down he did not give careful attention in the modern sense of the word to the chronological sequence of events that took place. We find problems in the sequence of events having to do with David and his introduction to Saul and his service with Saul and so forth and we find problems in the sequence of events through here. That is a subject for another study. Commentaries have dealt with this. I will just refer you to the critical experimental commentary or some other and you can study this on your own. The important thing to realize is Saul got his instructions from Samuel and Saul was a converted man and we have problems beginning to brew between Israel and the Philistines.

The Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel 30,000 chariots, 6000 horsemen and people like the sand on the seashore for multitude and they came up and they pitched Michmash eastward from Bethaven. Now when the men of Israel saw they were in a trap the people were distressed. The people hid themselves in caves, thickets, rocks, high places and pits. They were disappearing. Saul's army was evaporating right in front of his eyes. They were going away. Some of the Hebrews crossed Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead and as for Saul he was in Gilgal and the people that were with him were shaking. They were all trembling and scared to death of what was about to happen to them.

He waited seven days according to the time set that Samuel had appointed. Now I don't know if this is the original setting of seven days or if this is another setting of seven days, because there appears to be two years in between these particular items. It is very difficult to say for certain, but he waited seven days according to the time that Samuel had

appointed, but Samuel wasn't there and the people were scattering from Saul. So Saul said, bring here a burnt offering to me and peace offerings and Saul offered a burnt offering.

Now this does not superficially sound like a really big deal. However, there was a clear and well understood distinction between the prophetic and priestly offices and the king's office. Those two offices were not allowed to be merged. Israel did not have king priests. There was a potential for corruption whenever the power of the king intruded into the temple, into the tabernacle, into the service of God in this way and it was not allowed. Explicitly not allowed.

It came to pass that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering Samuel showed up and Saul went out to meet him and saluted him. And Samuel says, What have you done? I mean the immediate encounter is, What do you think you are doing? And Saul knew precisely what he was talking about. He did not say, What do you mean what have I done? He knew what he had done. He said because I saw that the people were scattered from me and that you came not within the days appointed and the Philistines gathered together at Michmash. Therefore I said the Philistines are going to come down upon me to Gilgal and I have not made supplication to the Lord. I forced myself therefore and offered a burnt offering.

Now this is a fascinating little piece here. He starts off with making an excuse. The people were scattering from me. Second, he blamed Samuel. You did not come in the time that you were supposed to come. And three, there were extenuating circumstances. The Philistines were gathering together and I had to get something done now. And they were coming down and actually this was a religious duty of mine that I had not finished my religious duties before I might have to face death. You have excuses. You have blaming others. You have pulling up the circumstances, you know giving all the extenuating circumstances that there might be in all the things that he had to do. Serious mistakes. Blaming others, making excuses, pretending. I did not really want to do this now. I had to force myself to do it.

Now this does not seem superficially to be a very big thing, but I want to tell you something. When the heart is right, these things don't happen. It is the heart that is the question here. And Samuel said to Saul, you have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which He commanded you. For now, up until now he should say, the Lord would have established your kingdom upon Israel forever. This could have been Saul's dynasty. We might never in all history ever heard of a guy named David except for this. He says but now your kingdom will not continue. The Lord has sought him a man after his own heart, which means he did not find him in Saul and the Lord has commanded him to be captive over his people because you have not kept that which the Lord commanded you.

Now this was Saul's initial error. He was looked upon as an ordinary person, man of the street, it does not seem like a very big error. But you see when you are King, small

errors become big errors and once your heart goes wrong. When your heart is not right you cannot put together the structure, an organization, be it an army, be it a government, be it anything else. And if your heart is not right you start doing stupid things like this. And if your heart is not right when you have done a stupid thing, you justify it, you make excuses, you call upon circumstances and you say I did not really mean it that way, I am not really that kind of person.

The repenting man. The man whose heart is right when he makes an error has a different response from this. He says he is not going to continue. Saul lost his dynasty, but he was still King and Saul still had duties. I mean God had turned His back on him in many ways, but the worst had not come upon Saul.

The question again is what is Saul's heart like? Now it is particularly distressing in the full knowledge of the fact that Saul's initial attitude was right. It is particularly distressing in realization that he was originally a humble man. In the realization that when God chose him and he was anointed and he went his way that God turned his heart and turned him into another man and changed him and converted him. And that this converted man somehow managed to revert by his own decisions, by what was going on in his heart to the old man. But no, not to the old man, but to a totally different kind of person. You can only conclude really that power must have corrupted Saul along the way.

Turn to I Samuel the 15th chapter and we will look at another instance of this whole thing. Samuel said to Saul, the Lord sent me to anoint you to be King over His people of Israel. Now therefore listen to the voice of the words of the Lord your God. We got a job we have to do. Thus saith the Lord of hosts. I remember what Amalek did to Israel. How he laid wait for him in the way when he came out of Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, utterly destroy all they have and spare them not. Slay man, woman, infant, suckling, ox, sheep, camel and ass. Hmm. That is a load isn't it? That is a real load and that gets handed down from God to Saul that he is to go to a city because of what they had done in the past and based upon some of the archaeological work that has been done in those cities you can kind of halfway understand why that particular civilization needed to be cauterized. Which basically means gotten rid of entirely.

But any way, this is the instruction he got. Whether you like it or whether you don't. God sovereignly, that is what He said to do. So Saul gathered his people together and numbered them in Telaim, 200,000 footman and 10,000 men of Judah. And he came to the city of Amalek and he laid wait in the valley. And Saul said to the Kenites, get out from under these people we do not want to destroy you with them because you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites and Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until he came to Shur against Egypt.

And he took Agag the King of the Amalekites alive. Now was that a part of the instructions? No it wasn't and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of a sword, but

Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, and the lamb, and everything that was good and they would not utterly destroy them, but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Did they do what they were told to do? No. A child can understand that. You may not like what they were told to do. You might have moral objections as to what you were told to do there. But at the same time do you have any question whatsoever whether they did what they were told to do? No. They were not supposed to leave anything alive, not camel, sheep, nor ass. Nothing. They were to kill them all.

Then came the word of the Lord to Samuel saying, It repents me that I have set up Saul to be King. He has turned back from following me. He has not performed my commandments and it grieved Samuel and he cried to the Lord all night. Samuel was a good hearted man and I know it had to be a pain to Samuel to see many of this type of thing take place. And he loved Saul. He loved him dearly. When Samuel rose early to meet him in the morning, it was told Samuel saying Saul is coming to Carmel and he is going about passed over and come down to Gilgal. So Samuel came to Saul. Saul said to him. Blessed be thou of the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

Now I don't know what to say about that. I really don't. Know human nature like I do, probably when he said those words, when they came out of his mouth there was a part of him that believed it. There was a part of him that would have said. Well, I think I have kept God's commandment. I kept the intent, this is what God wanted done. We have punished these people terribly and we did this. And Samuel said, when he said, we have kept the commandment of the Lord. Samuel had just a simple question. He said, well then would you mind explaining the bleating of sheep in mine ears? There should not be any sheep here because you were supposed to kill all the sheep? What is it and why is it that I heard the loing of the oxen? What was that MRRR.. I heard over there if you have done what you were told to do.

Oh well Saul said, they brought them from the Amalekites for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God and the rest we have utterly destroyed. Right. Right. Do you see the mistakes. The shedding of responsibility. Oh I didn't really do that. The people did it. And it wasn't that we had a bad motive. We thought that it was a good idea to have these to sacrifice to God. We are going to kill them. We are going to destroy them. We are going to offer them to God, we just haven't gotten around to doing it yet.

You got a twisted mind. You have got a mind here that has begun to lie to himself. Because that is the way that lying generally speaking starts. You generally start lying to yourself. And I was thinking about this this morning. You know how on earth can a man be true to God when he is not able to be true to himself. And so it is. He says... And like I say when he came back, he says, we've done what God has said. And there was a part of him that believed he had done what God said. Because we have a way in our minds sometimes

of just reinterpreting things and putting our own spin on them and believing our own spin and thinking we are really doing the right thing and not paying a bit of attention to what God said.

Saul said this and then Samuel said, you stay here for a minute and I am going to tell you what the Lord has said to me this night. And Saul said, Say on. He couldn't say much else (snickering). And Samuel said, when you were little in your own eyes weren't you made the head of the tribes of Israel and the Lord anointed you to be King over Israel. Now I can see Saul nodding his head, yeah. Notice the expression, when you were little in your own eyes and Samuel is in the process of putting his finger on Saul's problem. Because this thing about when you were little in your own eyes is past tense. And the Lord sent you on a journey and said Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites and fight against them until they are consumed. Why did you not obey the voice of the Lord that did fly upon the spoil and did evil in the sight of God?

I don't believe this stuff about bringing this in to be a sacrifice to God. You just figured that up when I showed up. It was the intent of you and the people to keep the best for yourself wasn't it. And Saul said to have Samuel, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. Notice the maintenance of this fiction in the face of conviction. I have done what you said. The Lord. I, I, I. I have gone the way that the Lord sent me. I brought Agag, the King of Amalek. I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites, but the people took the spoil, the sheep and the oxen and the chief of the things which, yeah, should have been utterly destroyed, but they want to sacrifice them to the Lord your God in Gilgal. Which was a lie.

Samuel said, Do you think the Lord has a great of delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken in the fat of rams for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of Lord, He has rejected you from being King.

Here was another occasion where it was conceivable that Saul could have changed. He could have changed on the first time when he was rejected from being King when his dynasty was severed. When his dynasty would not continue even though he himself would. At that point in time, it was very possible that there could have been a change that took place in his life because later on in the history of Israel we will find that there is a mean man named Ahab and says there was nobody like Ahab. There was no King ever in Israel or Judah that sold himself to be evil in the sight of God like Ahab. But when the prophesy about Ahab was given to him, the man repented in sack cloth and ashes and went quietly around the palace and God said look at that. And he deferred the punishment that he had pronounced upon Ahab a generation. And I have little doubt that had his children also taken the same attitude that curse would have passed to the next generation and utterly finally would have passed entirely, if those generations had not continued to hate God.

But, you have rejected the word of the Lord. He has rejected you from being King. Now Saul says to Samuel, I have sinned. I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words because I feared the people. Notice this little. It is not much, but again it is an excuse. The people.

I heard someone once give a sermon which he preached with real power that there are two things that a repenting man does not do. He does not blame others and he does not make excuses. And the contrast between David and Saul is astonishing. For when David is convicted of his sin, when Nathan looked at him and put his finger in his face and said you are the man. David said, I have sinned and that is all. Saul on every occasion justifies himself, minimizes his sin, gives extenuating circumstances, blames other people, sites good intentions. You know, manipulates the truth, massages the truth to find some other explanation and here in the end when he finally acknowledges his sin he says it is because I feared the people. It is at least partly their fault. Now therefore I pardon my sin and turn again with me that I may worship the Lord. He says, I want to go back and worship God. Samuel still won't do it. He says, No. I will not return with you because you have rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has rejected you from being King over Israel.

And as Samuel turned to go away he laid hold on the skirt of his mantle and it tore and Samuel said, the Lord has rent the Kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours that is better than you. And the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent. He is not a man that he should lie.

And Saul says, I have sinned, yet honor me now, I pray thee before the elders and before the Israel and turn again with me that I may worship the Lord. And Samuel turned again after Saul and Saul worshiped, that is did obeisance to the Lord.

You really wonder you know about the thought progressions that went on, the stages of the development of the alienation of Saul from God. The preoccupation with self. The determination to self-will and having his own way and it does make you wonder how things perceive.

The story kind of comes to a climax or really develops out into the area that we are trying to examine today in the 16th chapter of 1 Samuel. The Lord said to Samuel, How long are you going to moan for Saul seeing I have rejecting him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and get on the road. I am going to send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite for I have provided me a king among his sons. Well Samuel is rather concerned. He says, If he hears it he will kill me. The Lord says, that is no problem, take a heifer and says I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. When you get there sacrifice to the Lord and we have done our duty. Call Jesse to the sacrifice and I will show you what you are going to do.

Well Samuel did what God spoke and he came to Bethlehem and the elders of the town trembled at his coming and said, are you coming peacefully because Samuel was unquestionably the most powerful figure in Israel at this time. Far more so than Saul. And

he said I come peaceably. I come to sacrifice to the Lord. Sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. He sanctified Jesse and his sons and he called them to the sacrifice. It came to pass that when they were come, he slipped upon Eliab and said, Oh, look at this boy, surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the Lord said to Samuel, Don't look at his face, don't look at his height. I have refused him. Remember how tall Saul was. What a good looking guy he was, big, well favored, forget it. He said, the man looks on the outward appearance. The Lord looks on the heart.

And Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel and he said, Nope, that is not him either. He went all the way through all the boys and Samuel said, Is this all of them? It cannot be all of them? He said, Well, there is one more. He is the youngest. And this is a patter that you will see God repeat again and again and again. He is the youngest and he is out there keeping the sheep. He got the lowest job in the household probably and Samuel said you better go get him because we are not going to sit down until he is here. And he sent and he brought him in and he was ready and with all the beautiful countenance and good to look at and the Lord spoke in Samuel's ear and said you get up and anoint him, he is the one. Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of the brethren and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And here we have brought ourselves around to the occasion where an evil spirit begins to trouble a man. It does not tell us that Saul was demon possessed. It just simply says that an evil spirit oddly from the Lord troubled him. But remember what we said. This is not a malicious spirit. It is an adverse spirit from God. It is not to say that God sent him a demon or a wicked spirit, but a spirit to oppose him.

And you know something, I cannot help but wonder, you know, at the turmoil, the inner turmoil, the depression, the frustration of Saul, the near insanity of Saul. I cannot help but wonder if God sent an adverse spirit to a person with a clean and a pure heart. A person's whose heart was right with God, a person who was humble and obedient, a person who was not self justifying, who was not one who would blame others for his problems, but had a right spirit before God. If an adverse spirit would even make a difference in his life. If the evil spirit would even trouble him. If it would even make a difference? To be sure the righteous, those whose hearts are right do suffer adversity in the world. The adversity does not turn them away from God. The adversity does not drive them crazy. It does not make them all screwed up in their heads.

In Saul's case it really tore him badly. Now if you have ever really wondered how a person can get in trouble spiritually to where if you are in trouble where the spirit world is concerned, now you know one way. It is in this patter of self indulgence, self defense, self justification, unwillingness to repent, unwillingness to accept responsibility, the tendency to want to blame others for your sins. It is harboring in a way of the sinful, harboring and protection of the sinful self that opens a person up to a situation where God gives up on him

as it were. The spirit of the Lord leaves him and that spirit of the Lord leaving him left Saul wide open to this situation as it developed.

Disobedience persisted in that loses the spirit of God leaves a man empty and vulnerable. One of the really sad things about this story is that the only way that Saul could get relief was from music played by the one man that Saul came to hate above everybody else. David.

The irony is unbelievable. And I have little doubt that God's hand was in this irony. God has a very strong sense of irony it seems. He would give Saul relief when David was playing for him.

But in 1 Samuel 18:10, there is another interesting instance on this that I think is worth us taking a moment to think about. It came to pass on the morrow that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul and he was prophesying in the midst of his house and David played with his hand, as at other times are an instrument, and Saul was sitting there with a javelin in his hand. And he cast the javelin saying I will smite David to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence not once, but twice this happened and Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him and because the Lord had left him. Saul.

It is really strange to me that Saul was so crazed by this thing that he wanted to kill the only source of relief that he had. You know to say that Saul was insane I think is to understate things. He was really messed up in the head. He had an adverse spirit. I do not know if we would call it a demon because it does say that it came from God, but it does make you wonder about the sequence of events in the man's life and where he ultimately wound up. I think it is worth at least thinking about for a while for us and maybe doing some prayer and meditation on this subject. Because I think sometimes we take this question of sin and repentance and obedience to God kind of lightly. I think that while God is willing to cut us some slack and willing to look upon our hearts and know when we have repented and we are trying to put our feet back in the right way to where he will give us all kinds of mercy and grace and forgiveness.

You know if there is anything to be learned from this is that there is a limit to how far God will put up with or will continue to endure or walk along side of a person who is just going to persistently justify themselves, explain away their sins and refuse to just simply own up to who they are and what they are and what they have done and to repent honestly and openly before God. Self justification led to a terrible circumstance of an adverse spirit towards Saul.

There is one more situation in the time remaining today that I would like to take you to in the Old Testament. It is something not well understood. It is in 1 Kings chapter 22. And that is another one of these things that I have been often asked about. And they continued for three years with war between Syria and Israel. It came to pass in the third year that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. Now by this time, the

kingdom is divided. You have the Jews in the south. You have the kingdom of Israel in the north, headquarters in Jerusalem and headquarters in Samaria. And they were at war with Damascus. You know another power in that part of the area. King of Israel primarily is at war with him and the king of Judah has come down to him.

And he said to his servants, don't you know that Ramoth and Gilead are ours and all we are doing is sitting around here and we are not taking out of the hand of the king of Syria. It is a border dispute. Just a simple border dispute. He says now, let me just remind you, Ramoth over here. That is ours and it is still in Syrian hands and we are just sitting here and we are not doing anything about it. And he said to Jehoshaphat, will you go with me to battle to Ramoth and Gilead. The two of us together ought to be able to do this. We are Israelites. We are brothers. We cannot sit still and let this kind of thing be done to us.

And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as you are. My people are like your people. My horses are your horses. We are willing to work together. And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel. However, I think we should inquire of the word of the Lord today. (Laughing) In other words, I think we better pray about this, don't you think before we actually go charging off to get this done. We really need to ask. So the king of Israel gathered together the prophets, about 400 men and he said, Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle or shall I forbear and they said consistently go up for the Lord will deliver it into your hand. Okay. It is your battle, go do it. Four hundred of them. But Jehoshaphat was a funny guy. He says, Wait a minute. Isn't there a prophet of Jehovah here besides this. I don't know what he said? I don't know what he saw in those men. I don't know what he knew about them, but one thing he did know that in those 400 prophets that he was hearing from out there there was not one prophet of the true God among them.

I don't know if it was their robes, I don't know what. Well the king of Israel said, Well, yeah. There is one guy. Micaiah, the son of Imlah of whom we may acquire of Jehovah, but I have him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me but evil. Well that is typical. I hate him because he never ever has one good thing to say about me. And the king says, Oh, say it isn't so.

So the king of Israel called an officer and he said, go get Micaiah and bring him over here. The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah sat each one upon his throne, had their robes on in an open place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria and it was a big deal going on here. They had 400 prophets out there prophesying, probably singing, probably dancing, going through all kinds of displays of the things and maybe the different ways in which they brought their messages forth.

Zedekiah, the son of Chenanah, made him some horns of iron and he came up and he said with these shall the Lord, Thus saith the Lord. He actually by the way said, Thus saith Jehovah. He uses the name here. Now there is a curious thing about this because 400 of these guys are out here prophesying. Jehoshaphat says I don't see one prophet of Jehovah out here and yet this guy is claiming to prophesy in the name of Jehovah. But any way he

says with these horns of iron you will push the Syrians until you have consumed them and all the prophets prophesied saying Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and prosper for the Lord shall deliver to the king's hand. They all sang. They must have had a chorus that they sang over and over again.

Well the messenger that went to call Micaiah while all of this was going on spoke to him and said, Behold now. The words of the prophets declared good to the king with one mouth. I would suggest to you that you let your word be like one of them and that you have something good to say. And Micaiah said, As Jehovah lives, what he says to me that is what I am going to speak. So he came to the king. And the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go up to Rahmoth-Gilead to battle or shall we forbear. And he answered him saying, Go and prosper for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.

That is odd. This is interesting. Here is this prophet who comes along and says I am just going to tell him what God tells me to do. But listen to what the King says. How many times shall I, and he uses this word, adjure you to tell me nothing except what is true in the name of the Lord. Now I have no idea whether Micaiah was sarcastic or whether he was tempted to go along. I have no idea what was in his mind, but he seems to be a man of a lot of courage. But when he was adjured. That is commanded officially to speak. In Israel the adjuration to testify or to tell the truth was like you know swearing, taking an oath before God that you were guilty of perjury if you didn't. So at that point Micaiah has no choice, but to tell him the truth.

Now what is funny about this though is again, you've got a king that hates him and he hates him because he will never prophesy anything good about him, but only what is bad. He sends for the guy, the guy comes before him, Micaiah does and he says tell me and Micaiah gives him something good and he will not take it, because he knows better. There was something down inside the king that he knew better. And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills like sheep that do not have a shepherd and the Lord said, these have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace. And the king understood that. All the children of Israel scattered on the hills with no shepherds. That meant the king was dead.

And the king of Israel said, Now, see, there. Didn't I tell you he would prophesy no good concerning me but evil. And he said, Micaiah he says, now hear the word of the Lord. I saw Jehovah sitting on his throne. All the hosts of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left and the Lord said, who shall persuade Ahab that he shall go up and fall at Rahmoth-Gilead and one said on this manner, another said on that manner and there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said, How. He says, I will go forth and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets and he said, you shall persuade him and prevail also. It will work. He will believe it. You go do it. Now therefore, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets out here. And the Lord while he has himself spoken evil concerning you.

You know there is some deep and profound lessons involved in this. And one of them is that God will allow you to hear what you want to hear. You are going to hear this. If you want it. If you want it bad enough, he will let you find all the justification, all the reasons that you possibly can. He will give you 400 prophets that will tell you what you want to hear. And if you want to hear the truth, he will send you the one prophet to tell you that.

Now the thing that bothers people though is this spirit that comes into the presence of God and says I will go be a lying spirit in the mouth of this prophet and God says, that will work, you do that. How does this sort of thing happen? I don't know. I just know Micaiah told us what he saw in the vision. I have no idea why or how that took place? Was this one of the fallen angels that was in a levy that had come before God. And he said, I will do it. I will do it this way and God gave him leave to go do it like he gave Satan leave to go and smite Job's body. Yeah.... It could be the way it was. It could be also that this is just a vision that Micaiah saw as opposed to a literal event in heaven. I have no way of knowing the answer to that at all.

But the lessons from it are pretty clear. That is the presence of a lying spirit in the mouth of prophets is something you have got to deal with in this world and if that is what you want to hear they will always be there for you to listen to. Well, what happened in all of this was that he said, that Zedekiah went near and he smote Micaiah on the cheek and he said, now just which way did the spirit of the Lord go for me to speak to you. And Micaiah said, you shall see in that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide yourself from the enemy that takes the city. The king of Israel said take Micaiah, carry him back to Amon to the governor of the city, to Joash the king's son and say this. Thus saith the king, put this fellow in prison, feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction until I come in peace. And Micaiah, said if you return at all in peace then the Lord has not spoken by me and he said, listen oh people every one of you. Poor man. You have no idea what happened to him. He was put in jail, supposed to be fed with water of affliction until the king came back in peace and the story goes on to tell us that the king died in battle and never returned. I would like to think that somebody felt sorry for Micaiah and once the king was dead let him go.

But there is a spirit world and it is a busy world. There is a lot of stuff going on out there. It is very troubling when you understand and when you begin to think well how do I know that there hasn't been some lying spirit. Or how do I know that this is the truth and how do I know that these prophets are speaking to me from God.

There are two things I think that you need to have. One of them is a really good strong knowledge of the Bible and what the Bible says, for it is very very difficult to deceive a person who has, understands, believes the scriptures. And the other thing you really need to have is a right heart before God. Because an adverse spirit really does not work against a right heart. You know the temptation to lie does not work against a right heart.

We will be tempted to sin. We will make mistakes. We will do things through weaknesses and we will have God come along and His spirit will come along and He will show us where we are wrong. And the right heart before God is able to say, I was wrong. I am sorry. I won't do that again, but the heart that says. Well, the people made me do it. I did not really mean it. I am not really that kind of person, it was somebody else's fault. The person who will justify himself, make excuses for himself and blame other people has not repented and is in the position of Saul, a man who spent the remainder of his life with God having departed from him and the spirit having departed from him, very much alone and alone in ways that you and I cannot even begin to understand because his heart simply was not right before God.

I do not tell you all this to make you afraid or to scare you at all, but perhaps to sober you into realizing that God will tolerate a lot of things from people when their heart is right. When they really do intend well and when they are honest and when they will tell the truth. First tell the truth to themselves and then they will tell the truth to God. Those people find mercy and forgiveness there. Those people who find a hard time doing that find themselves feeling very much alone.

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